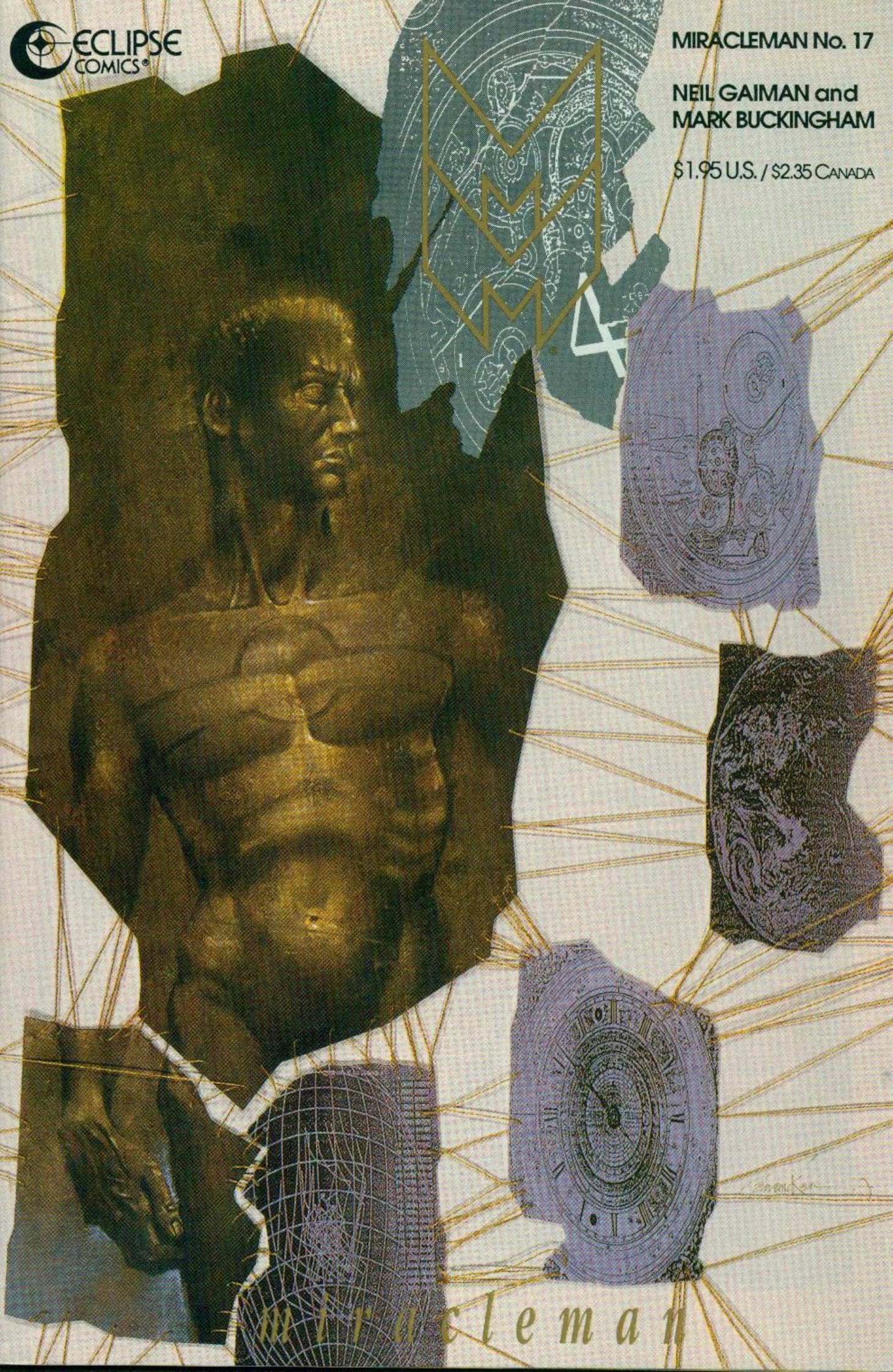
ECLIPSE COMICS®
MIRACLEMAN No. 17
NEIL GAIMAN and MARK BUCKINGHAM
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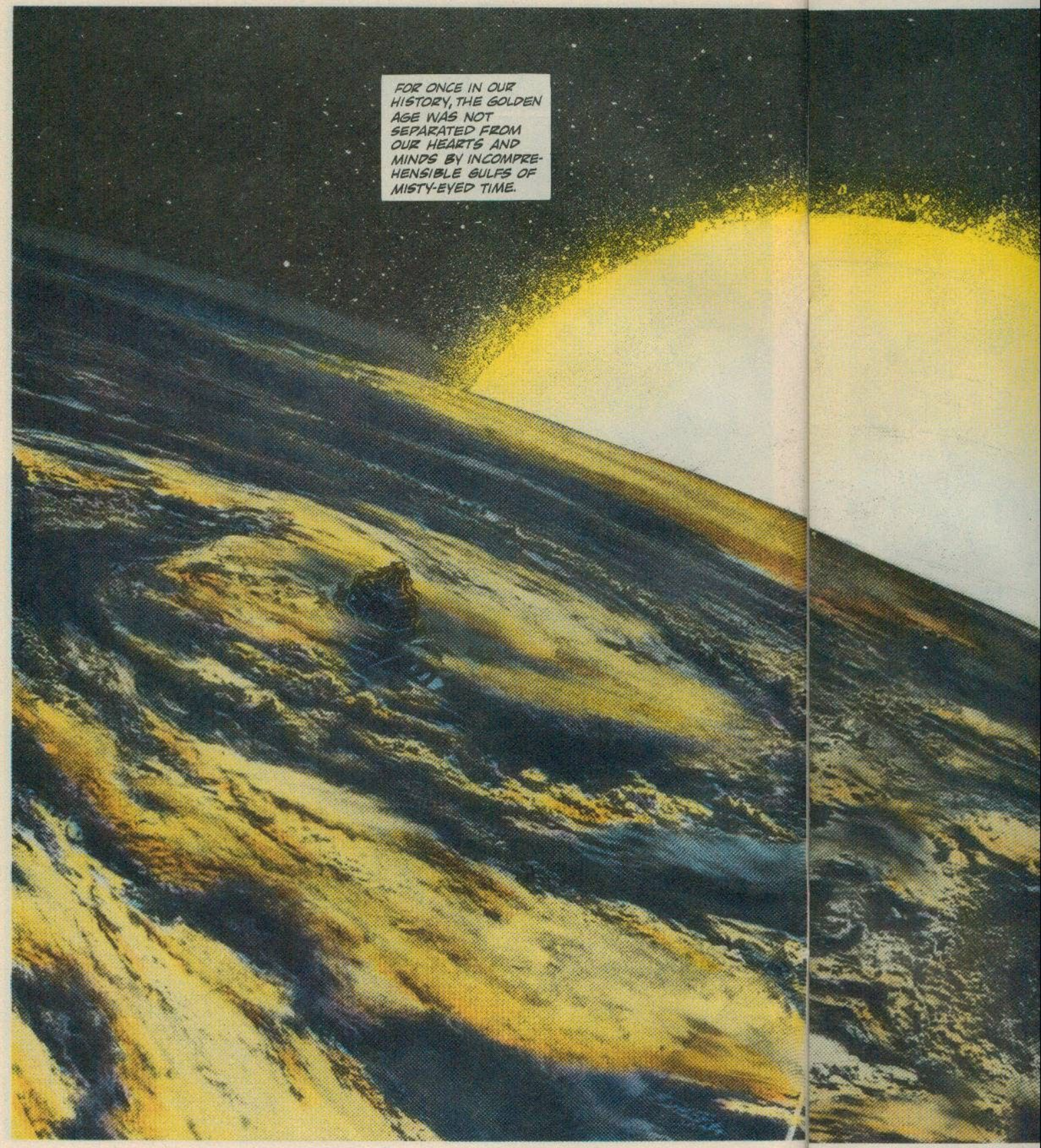
miracleman

IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES.
AND WHAT WAS MIRACULOUS WAS THIS: EVERYBODY KNEW IT.

THE OLD WORLD HAD BEEN TOO INCOMPETENT AND INCOMPLETE FOR WORDS.
THE NEW WORLD WAS THE WORLD AS WE'D ALWAYS DREAMED IT COULD BE--A GOLDEN DAWN RISING ON AN AGE OF MIRACLES UNDREAMED OF, EXCEPT, PERHAPS, IN THE MOST ESCAPIST OF FANTASIES.

IT WAS SOMETHING ENTIRELY NEW IN HUMAN HISTORY.
IT WAS A TIME OF INNOCENCE, OF MAGIC, OF TRUTH.
IT WAS A TIME OF RECONCILIATION, WHEN THE MUNDANE AND THE MIRACULOUS PARTOOK OF EACH OTHER, TO THE ADVANTAGE OF BOTH.


FOR ONCE IN OUR HISTORY, THE GOLDEN AGE WAS NOT SEPARATED FROM OUR HEARTS AND MINDS BY INCOMPREHENSIBLE GULFS OF MISTY-EYED TIME.

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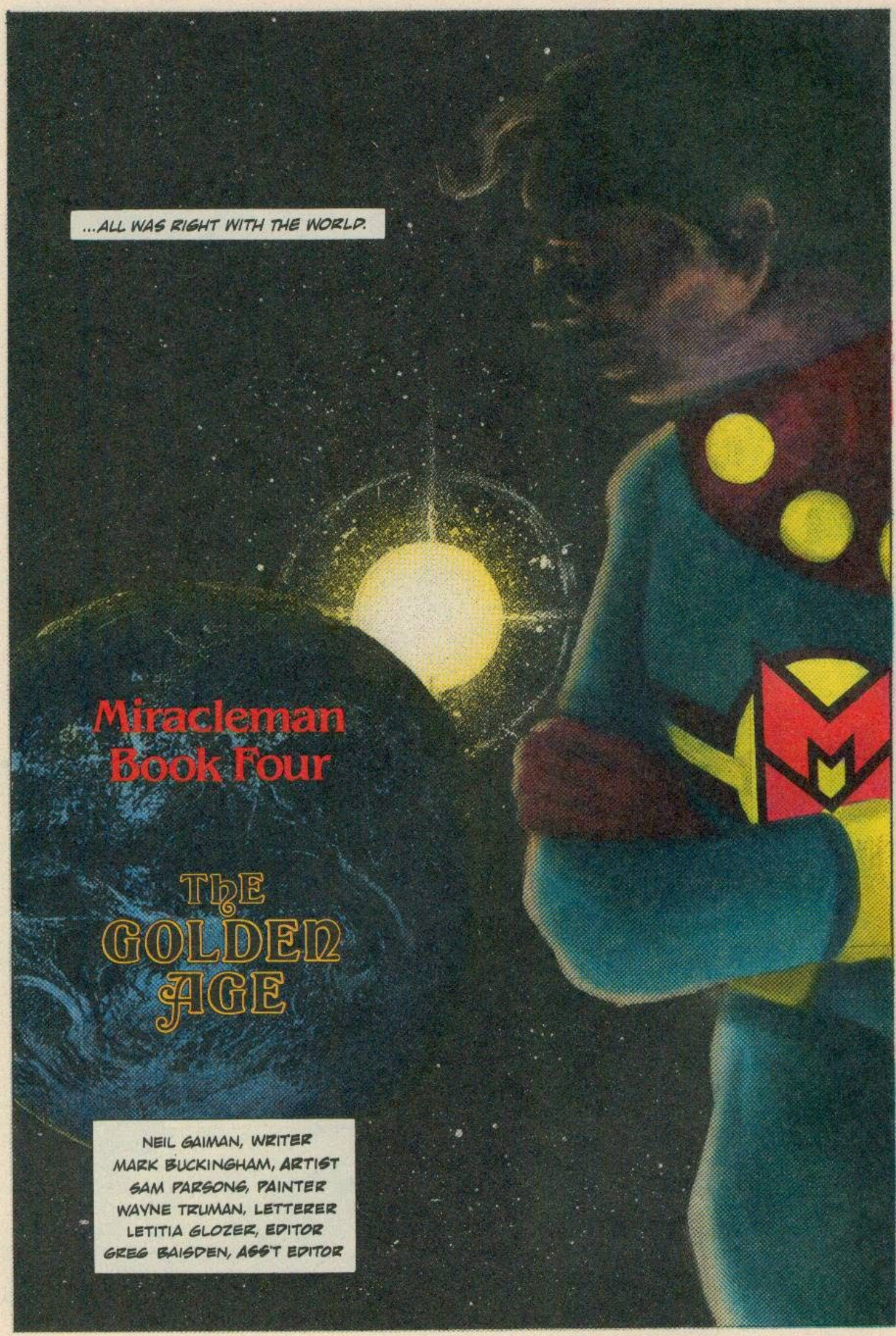

...ALL WAS RIGHT WITH THE WORLD.
Miracleman
Book Four
THE
GOLDEN
AGE
NEIL GAIMAN, WRITER
MARK BUCKINGHAM, ARTIST
SAM PARSONS, PAINTER
WAYNE TRUMAN, LETTERER
LETITIA GLOZER, EDITOR
GREG BAISDEN, ASS'T EDITOR

A PRAYER AND HOPE...

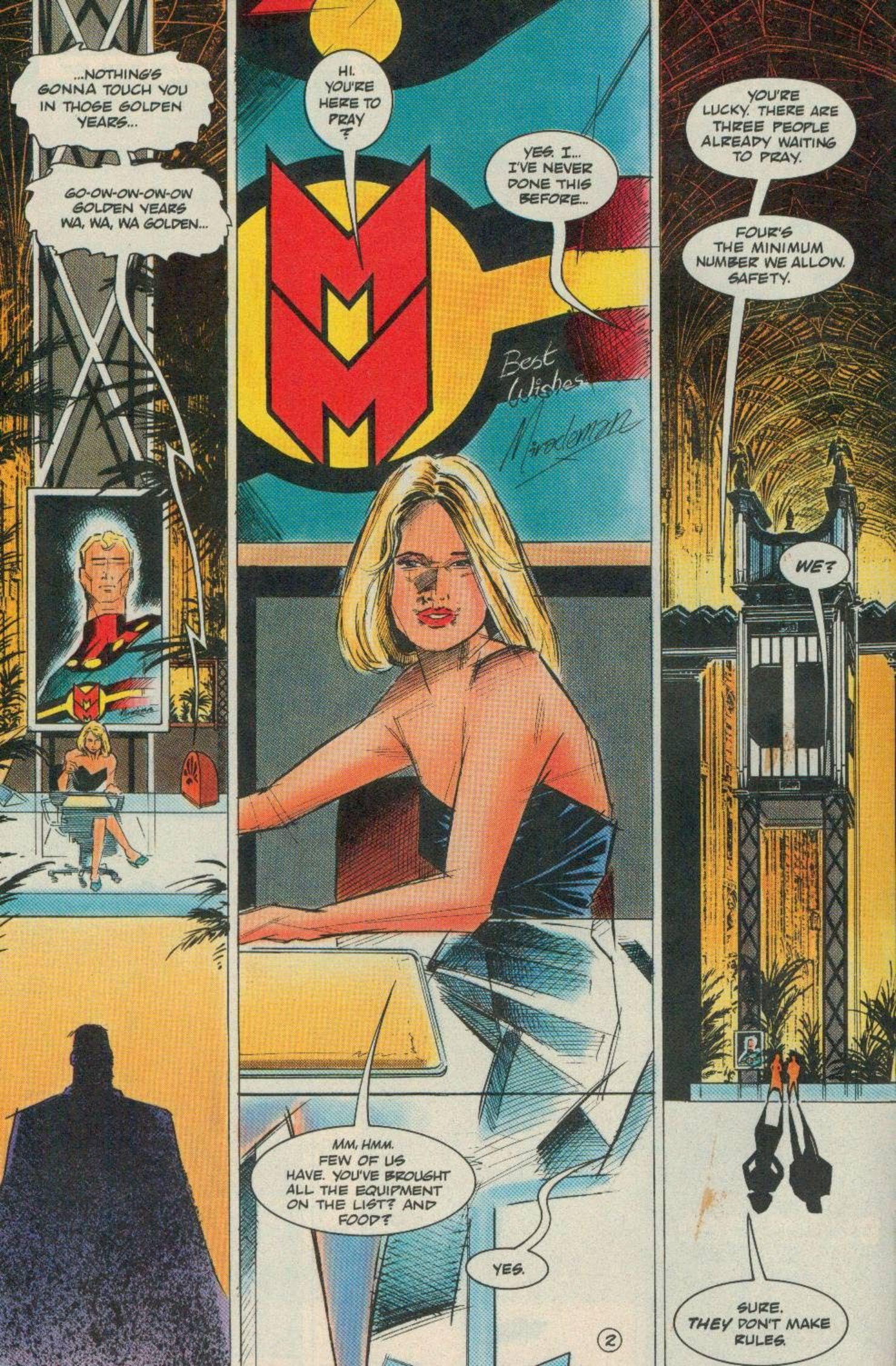
"THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT ARE JUST TOO BIG. YOU CAN'T FIT THEM INTO YOUR HEAD-- THEY STOP AT THE EYES, AND WON'T GO IN.

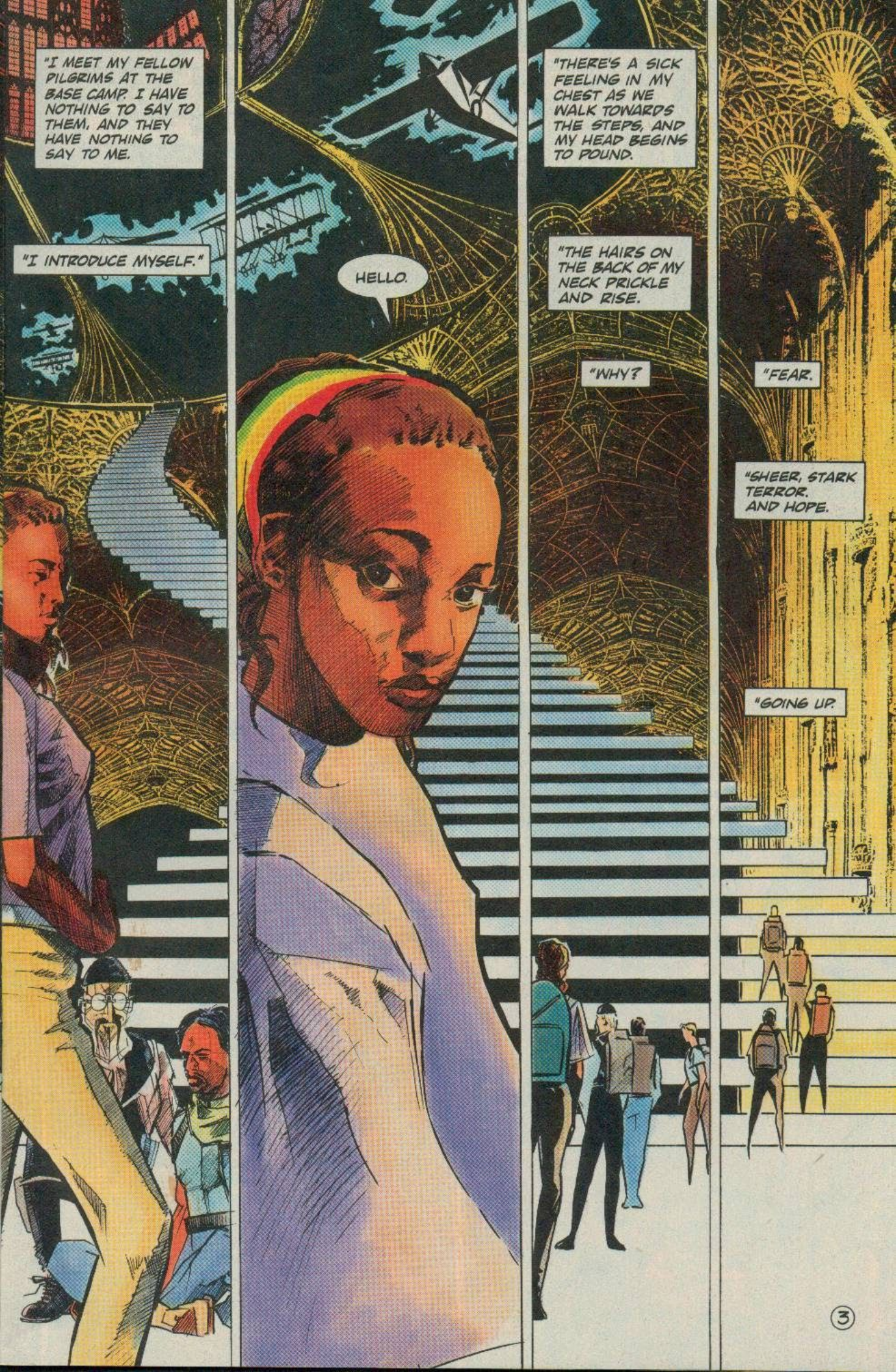
"YOU CAN SEE THEM, BUT YOU NEVER BELIEVE THEM, NO MATTER HOW FAMILIAR THEY BECOME.

"YOU THINK ABOUT THEM TOO HARD, YOU MEET YOUR MIND COMING BACK AT YOU.

"GOING UP."

"DATE: AUGUST 3RD, 1987.


...NOTHING'S GONNA TOUCH YOU IN THOSE GOLDEN YEARS...
GO-OW-OW-OW-OW GOLDEN YEARS WA, WA, WA GOLDEN...
HI. YOU'RE HERE TO PRAY?
YES. I... I'VE NEVER DONE THIS BEFORE...
Best Wishes
MM, HMM. FEW OF US HAVE. YOU'VE BROUGHT ALL THE EQUIPMENT ON THE LIST? AND FOOD?
YES.
YOU'RE LUCKY. THERE ARE THREE PEOPLE ALREADY WAITING TO PRAY.
FOUR'S THE MINIMUM NUMBER WE ALLOW. SAFETY.
WE?
SURE. THEY DON'T MAKE RULES.
2


"I MEET MY FELLOW PILGRIMS AT THE BASE CAMP. I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO THEM, AND THEY HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO ME.
"I INTRODUCE MYSELF."
HELLO.
"THERE'S A SICK FEELING IN MY CHEST AS WE WALK TOWARDS THE STEPS, AND MY HEAD BEGINS TO POUND.
"THE HAIRS ON THE BACK OF MY NECK PRICKLE AND RISE.
"WHY?
"FEAR.
"SHEER, STARK TERROR. AND HOPE.
"GOING UP.

"AT EVENING, WE STOP FOR FOOD. WE HAVE BEEN CLIMBING THE CENTRAL STAIRCASE FOR MANY HOURS.
"MY LUNGS ACHE, AS DO MY CALF MUSCLES.
"WE HAVE GONE THROUGH A HALL FILLED WITH WORLD WAR ONE BIPLANES; ANOTHER FILLED WITH MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.
"THE PLACE WHERE WE STOP CONTAINS NOTHING BUT DINOSAURS. SKELETONS OF STONE AND BONE AND PLASTIC. TINY PLASTIC MODELS AND HUGE ANIMATRONIC RECONSTRUCTIONS.
"BELOW A NEON BRONTOSAURUS WE SIT AND UNWRAP OUR FOOD.
"THE ORIENTAL, TAIPEK, EATS SOMETHING THAT SMELLS SICKLY STRANGE, LIKE ROTTEN HONEY.
"HE OFFERS ME SOME, BUT I REFUSE."
I WONDER WHAT HE'LL BE LIKE.

THE CHILDREN IN MY VILLAGE ARE AFFLICTED BY A DISEASE THAT OUR DOCTORS CANNOT IDENTIFY. THEY ARE WASTING, AND DYING. SO THIN AND DRY AND SAD.
I VOLUNTEERED TO COME TO PRAY FOR HIM TO CURE THEM. I KNOW HE WILL SAY YES.

"DURING THE NIGHT I AM WOKEN BY THE SOUNDS OF COPULATION. THE BRONTOSAURUS HAS CEASED TO GLOW, AND IN THE DARKNESS I CANNOT TELL WHO IS DOING WHAT TO WHOM.

"GWEN AND CAIRO?

"GWEN AND TAIPEK?

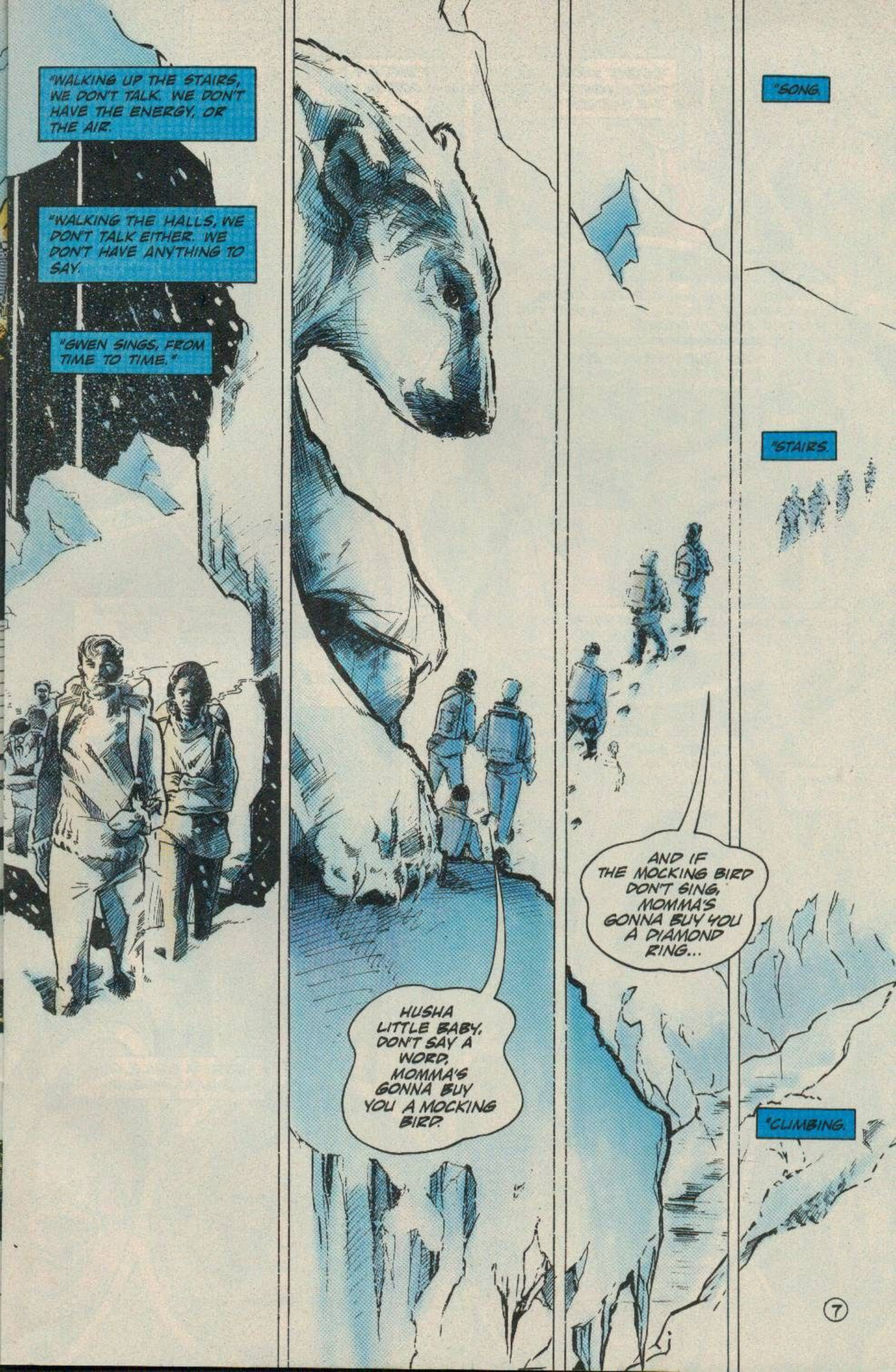
"TAIPEK AND CAIRO?

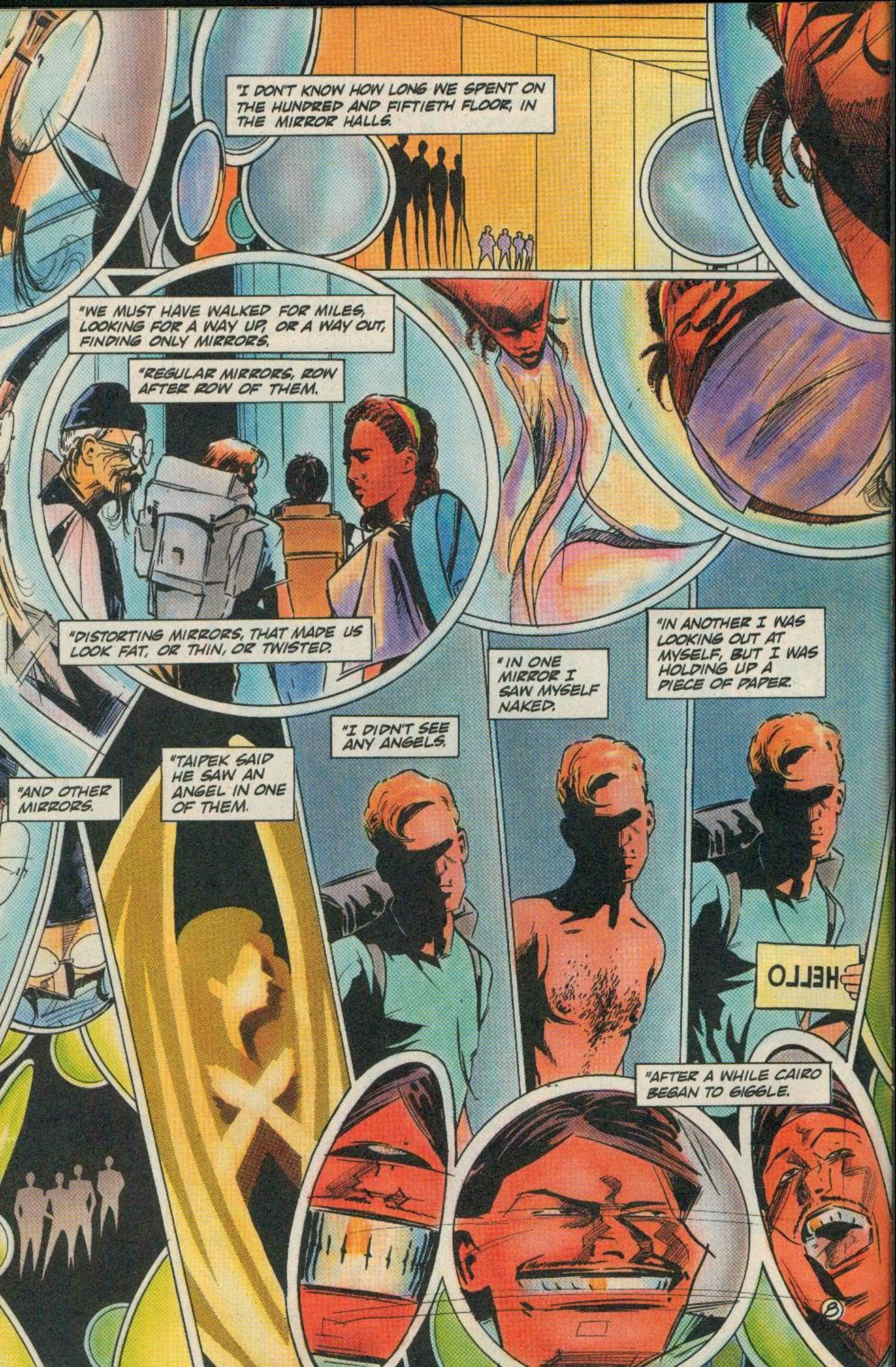
"ALL OF THEM?

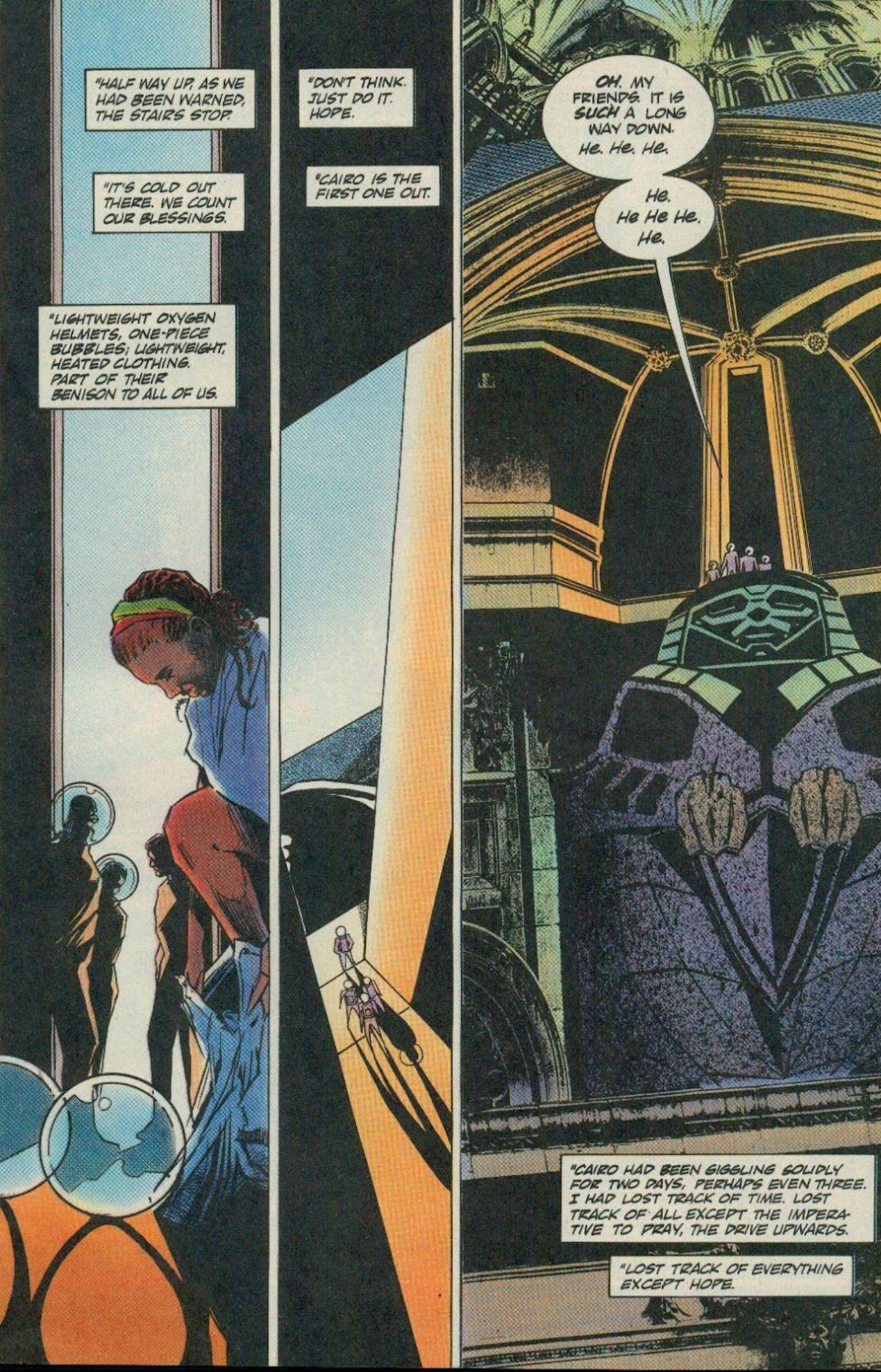
"FEELING MORE ALONE THAN BEFORE, I WAIT IN SILENCE UNTIL THEY GRUNT AND THRUST THEIR WAY TO EVENTUAL SILENCE, AND, AFTER A WHILE, I DRIFT BACK TO SLEEP.

"I DREAM OF CLIMBING STAIRS.

"I ACHE ALL OVER.
"THE RHYTHMS OF THE CLIMB BEGIN TO IMPRINT THEMSELVES ON MY CONSCIOUSNESS.
"STEP AFTER STEP AFTER STEP, HOUR AFTER HOUR, UNTIL WE REACH THE NEXT FLOOR.
"THEN WE WALK AROUND THE INSIDE OF THIS TOWER OF MIRACLES, THROUGH HALL AFTER HALL FILLED WITH ODDMENTS AND DELIGHTS OF EVERY SHAPE AND KIND, UNTIL WE REACH THE BOTTOM OF THE NEXT RUNG OF STAIRS.
"AND UP.


"WALKING UP THE STAIRS, WE DON'T TALK. WE DON'T HAVE THE ENERGY, OR THE AIR.
"WALKING THE HALLS, WE DON'T TALK EITHER. WE DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY.
"GWEN SINGS, FROM TIME TO TIME."
HUSHA LITTLE BABY, DON'T SAY A WORD, MOMMA'S GONNA BUY YOU A MOCKING BIRD.
AND IF THE MOCKING BIRD DON'T SING, MOMMA'S GONNA BUY YOU A DIAMOND RING...
"SONG.
"STAIRS.
"CLIMBING.


"I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG WE SPENT ON THE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH FLOOR, IN THE MIRROR HALLS.
"WE MUST HAVE WALKED FOR MILES, LOOKING FOR A WAY UP, OR A WAY OUT, FINDING ONLY MIRRORS.
"REGULAR MIRRORS, ROW AFTER ROW OF THEM.
"DISTORTING MIRRORS, THAT MADE US LOOK FAT, OR THIN, OR TWISTED.
"AND OTHER MIRRORS.
"TAIPEK SAID HE SAW AN ANGEL IN ONE OF THEM.
"I DIDN'T SEE ANY ANGELS.
"IN ONE MIRROR I SAW MYSELF NAKED.
"IN ANOTHER I WAS LOOKING OUT AT MYSELF, BUT I WAS HOLDING UP A PIECE OF PAPER.
HELLO
"AFTER A WHILE CAIRO BEGAN TO GIGGLE.


"HALF WAY UP, AS WE HAD BEEN WARNED, THE STAIRS STOP.
"IT'S COLD OUT THERE. WE COUNT OUR BLESSINGS.
"LIGHTWEIGHT OXYGEN HELMETS, ONE-PIECE BUBBLES; LIGHTWEIGHT, HEATED CLOTHING. PART OF THEIR BENISON TO ALL OF US.
"DON'T THINK. JUST DO IT. HOPE.
"CAIRO IS THE FIRST ONE OUT.
OH. MY FRIENDS. IT IS SUCH A LONG WAY DOWN. He. He. He.
He. He He He. He.
"CAIRO HAD BEEN GIGGLING SOLIDLY FOR TWO DAYS, PERHAPS EVEN THREE. I HAD LOST TRACK OF TIME. LOST TRACK OF ALL EXCEPT THE IMPERATIVE TO PRAY, THE DRIVE UPWARDS.
"LOST TRACK OF EVERYTHING EXCEPT HOPE.

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"AFTER THREE HOURS OF CLIMBING, WE LOST HIM FOR GOOD."

I WILL STOP HERE.

I DO NOT NEED TO CLIMB ANY MORE. YOU SEE, I UNDERSTAND IT ALL NOW.

I AM *HIM*. I AM A MIRACLE.

TO THINK I WAS SO *BLIND*.

I MYSELF CAN SAVE MY TOWN. I WILL FLY TO THEM, *WHOOSH*, AND SAY, LOOK AT ME, IT IS CAIRO. I'M *BACK!*

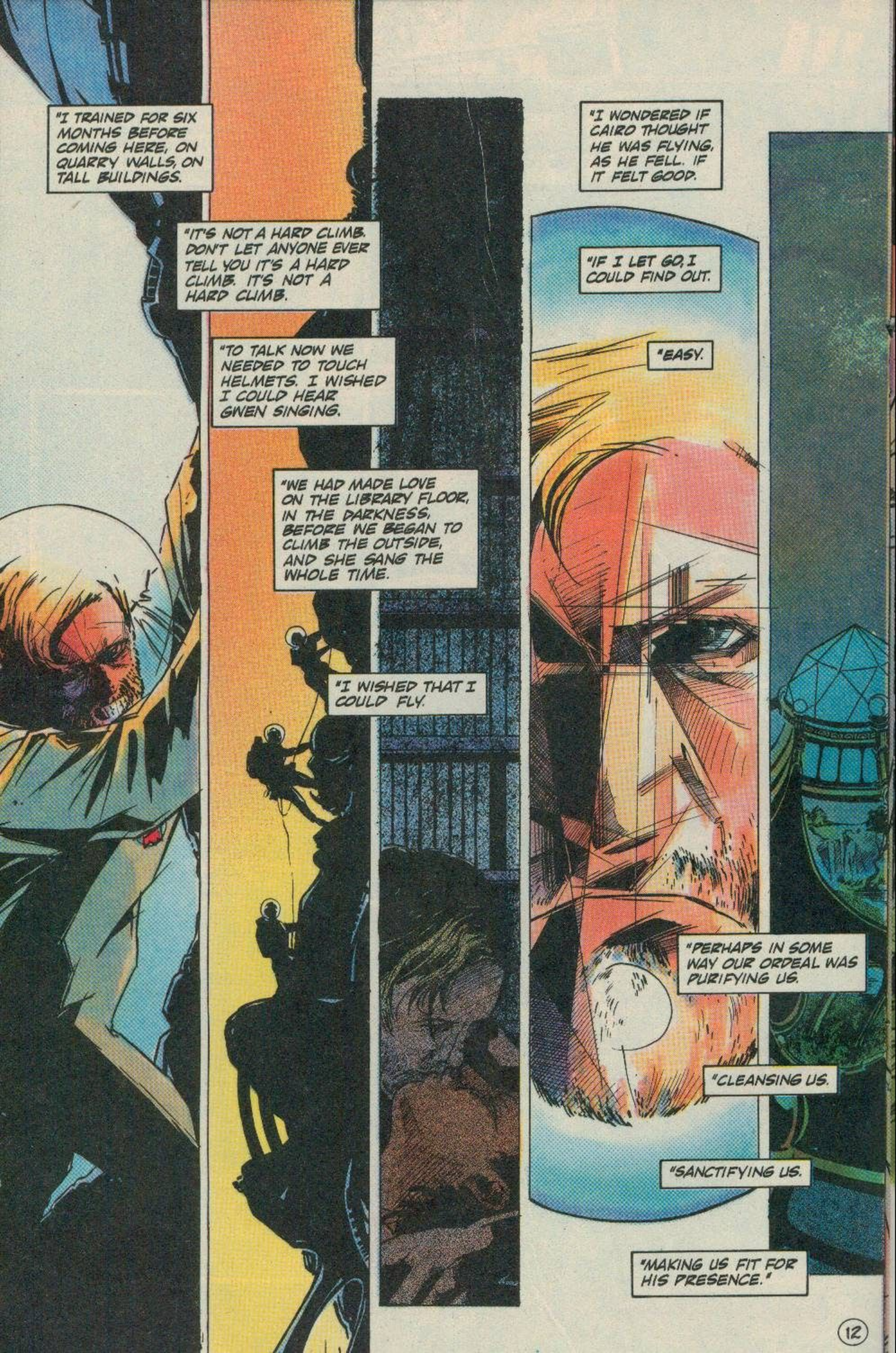
ALL ALONG I WAS *HE*, I WAS THE MIRACLE GOD, AND NOT *ONE* OF YOU SILLY PEOPLE *KNEW* IT.

OH, HOW WE MUST LAUGH. I CAN *FLY*, SO HOW FOOLISH I WAS TO CLIMB ALL THIS WAY.

WHOOSH! He. He. He.

LOOK UP, SILLY PEOPLE! LOOK UP!

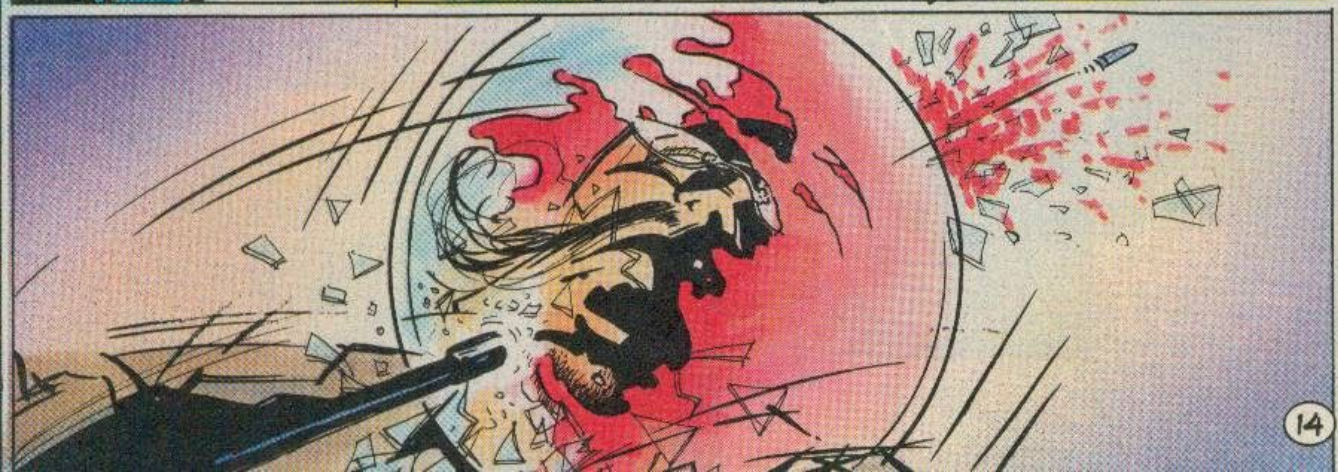
HELLO.
YOU KNOW, THERE ARE MEANT TO BE FOUR OF YOU.
"THERE ARE 'REST STOPS' ON THE WAY. EVERY HALF-MILE, OR SO. PLACES WHERE YOU CAN TAKE OFF YOUR AIR HELMET, USE THE TOILETS, AND DRINK WATER."
four. of. you.
"WE WERE LONG OUT OF FOOD. HUNGRY, NOW, AND LIGHTHEADED. BUT THAT IS THE CORRECT WAY TO APPROACH A GOD, HAVING FASTED, AND UNDERGONE TRAVAIL."
WE WERE FOUR, BUT ONE OF US WENT MAD, AND WE HAD TO LEAVE HIM BEHIND.
MIRACLEDOG FOUND A BODY, ON A LEDGE ON THE 30TH FLOOR.
I EXPECT THAT WAS YOUR FRIEND.
was. your. friend.

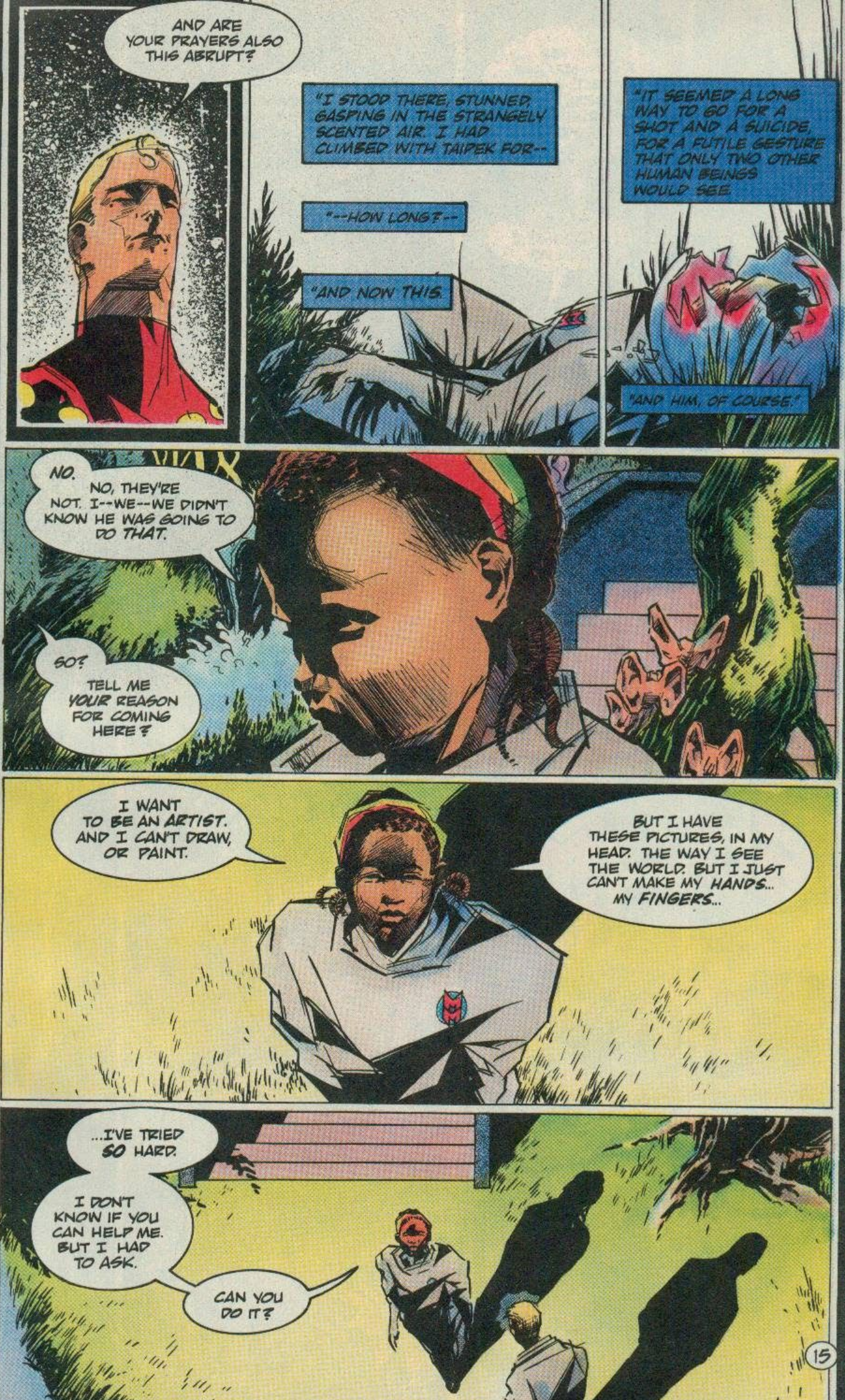

"I TRAINED FOR SIX MONTHS BEFORE COMING HERE, ON QUARRY WALLS, ON TALL BUILDINGS.
"IT'S NOT A HARD CLIMB. DON'T LET ANYONE EVER TELL YOU IT'S A HARD CLIMB. IT'S NOT A HARD CLIMB.
"TO TALK NOW WE NEEDED TO TOUCH HELMETS. I WISHED I COULD HEAR GWEN SINGING.
"WE HAD MADE LOVE ON THE LIBRARY FLOOR, IN THE DARKNESS, BEFORE WE BEGAN TO CLIMB THE OUTSIDE, AND SHE SANG THE WHOLE TIME.
"I WISHED THAT I COULD FLY.
"I WONDERED IF CAIRO THOUGHT HE WAS FLYING, AS HE FELL. IF IT FELT GOOD.
"IF I LET GO, I COULD FIND OUT.
"EASY.
"PERHAPS IN SOME WAY OUR ORDEAL WAS PURIFYING US.
"CLEANSING US.
"SANCTIFYING US.
"MAKING US FIT FOR HIS PRESENCE."

THERE IS ATMOSPHERE UP HERE, AND WARMTH.
IT MEANS LITTLE TO ME, BUT CERTAIN OF THE PLANTS REQUIRE IT.
"HOPE..."

WELL, MY PILGRIMS?
WHAT HAVE YOU COME TO ME FOR?

DEATH.

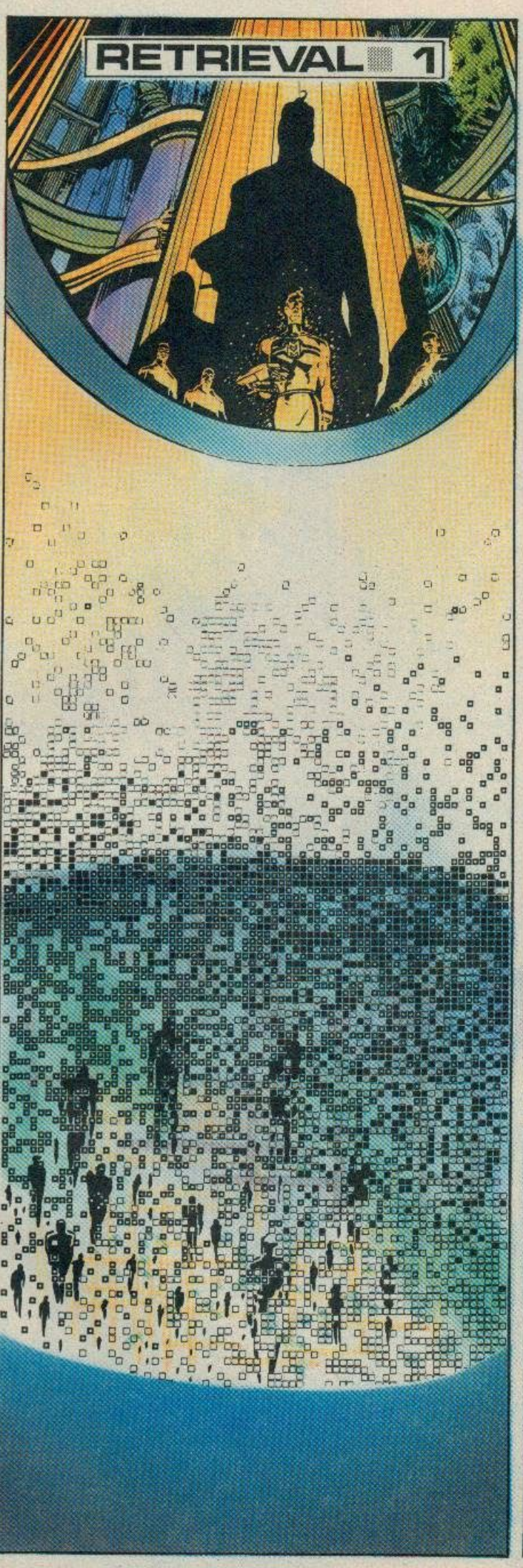



AND ARE YOUR PRAYERS ALSO THIS ABRUPT?
"I STOOD THERE, STUNNED, GASPING IN THE STRANGELY SCENTED AIR. I HAD CLIMBED WITH TAIPEK FOR--
"--HOW LONG?--
"AND NOW THIS.
"IT SEEMED A LONG WAY TO GO FOR A SHOT AND A SUICIDE. FOR A FUTILE GESTURE THAT ONLY TWO OTHER HUMAN BEINGS WOULD SEE.
"AND HIM, OF COURSE."
NO.
NO, THEY'RE NOT. I--WE--WE DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS GOING TO DO THAT.
SO?
TELL ME YOUR REASON FOR COMING HERE?
I WANT TO BE AN ARTIST. AND I CAN'T DRAW, OR PAINT.
BUT I HAVE THESE PICTURES, IN MY HEAD. THE WAY I SEE THE WORLD. BUT I JUST CAN'T MAKE MY HANDS... MY FINGERS...
...I'VE TRIED SO HARD.
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU CAN HELP ME. BUT I HAD TO ASK.
CAN YOU DO IT?

YES. YES, I CAN. YOU ARE CORRECT; EACH OF YOU SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO ART. YES.
I WILL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.
AND YOU?
MY DAUGHTER, HOPE. SHE WAS HURT IN LONDON, IN THE BATTLE WITH YOUR ADVERSARY. BRAIN DAMAGE.
SHE HAS BEEN IN A COMA FOR TWO YEARS. THEY'RE GETTING READY TO PULL THE PLUG.
CAN'T YOU SAVE HER? GIVE HER A NEW BODY? GET HER BACK FOR ME?
NO.

NO?
WHY NOT?
DAMN IT! YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE THIS WOMAN INTO AN ARTIST AND YOU WON'T SAVE MY DAUGHTER'S LIFE?
WHAT KIND OF SENSE IS THAT?
IT'S JUST A QUESTION OF RELATIVE VALUES, I SUPPOSE.
WHAT'S IMPORTANT CHANGES FROM WHERE YOU'RE LOOKING.
COME ON. WE'VE GOT A LONG WAY TO GO.

"THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT ARE JUST TOO BIG. YOU CANT FIT THEM INTO YOUR HEAD--THEY STICK IN THE MIND, AND WON'T GO IN...
"YOU NEVER BELIEVE THEM, NO MATTER HOW FAMILIAR THEY BECOME.
"YOU THINK ABOUT THEM TOO HARD. YOU SEE A LITTLE GIRL'S DEAD EYES STARING UP AT YOU.
"HOPE?
"GOING DOWN."
END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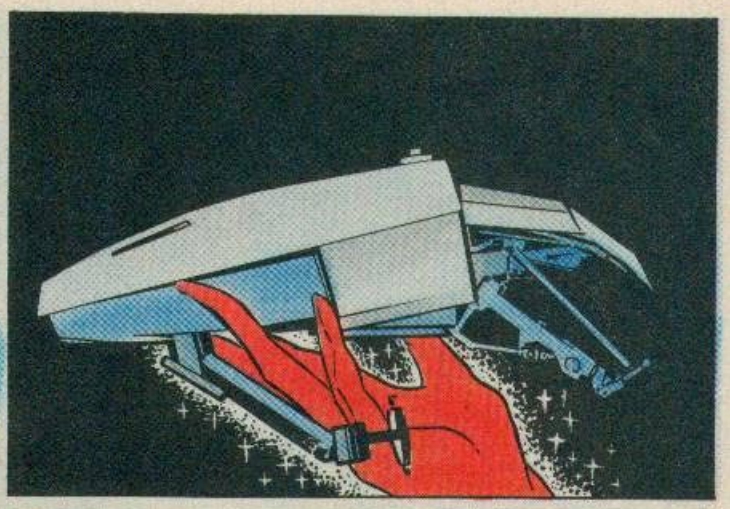

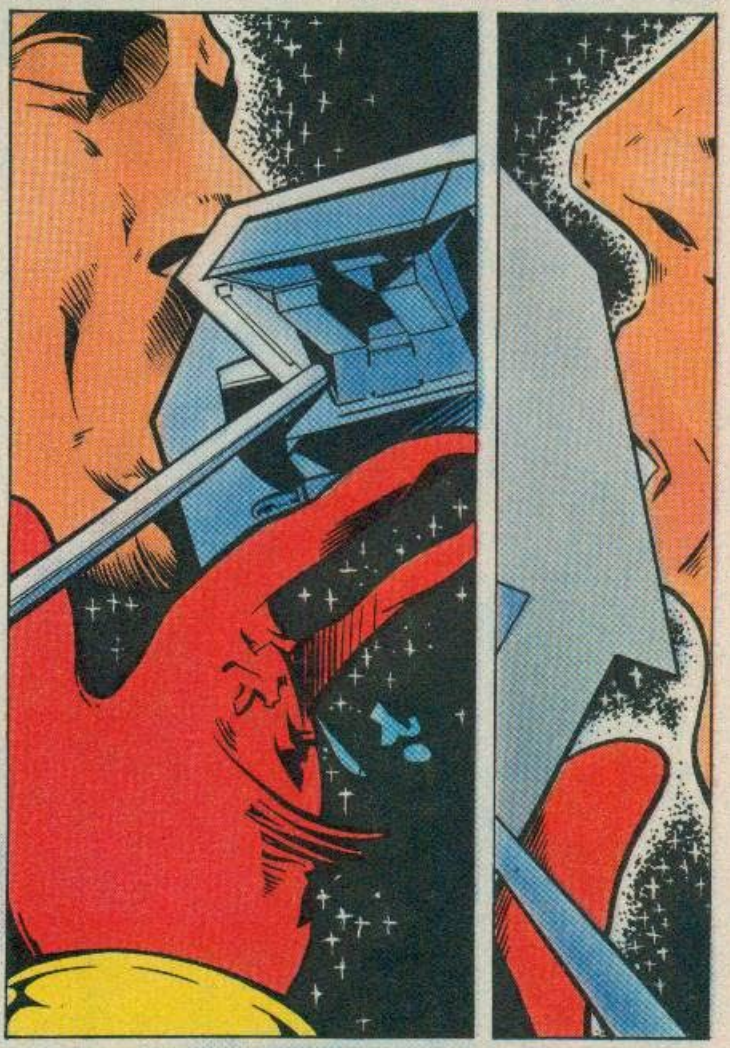

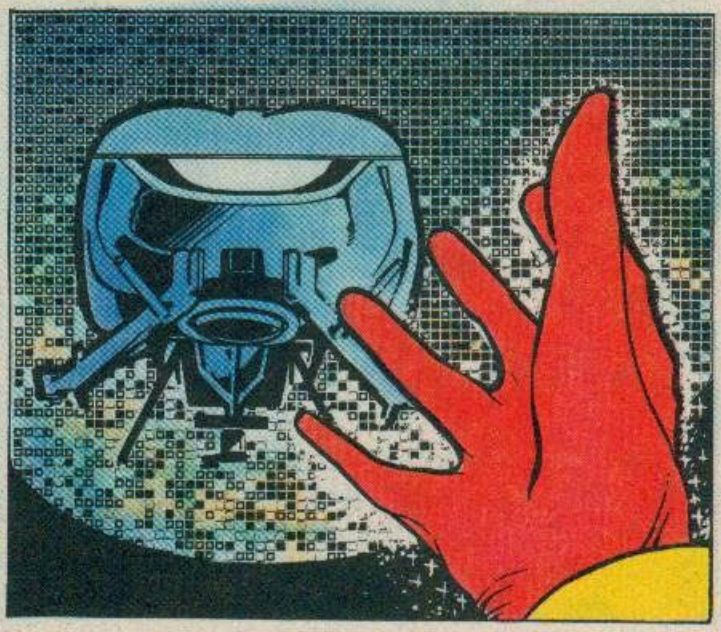

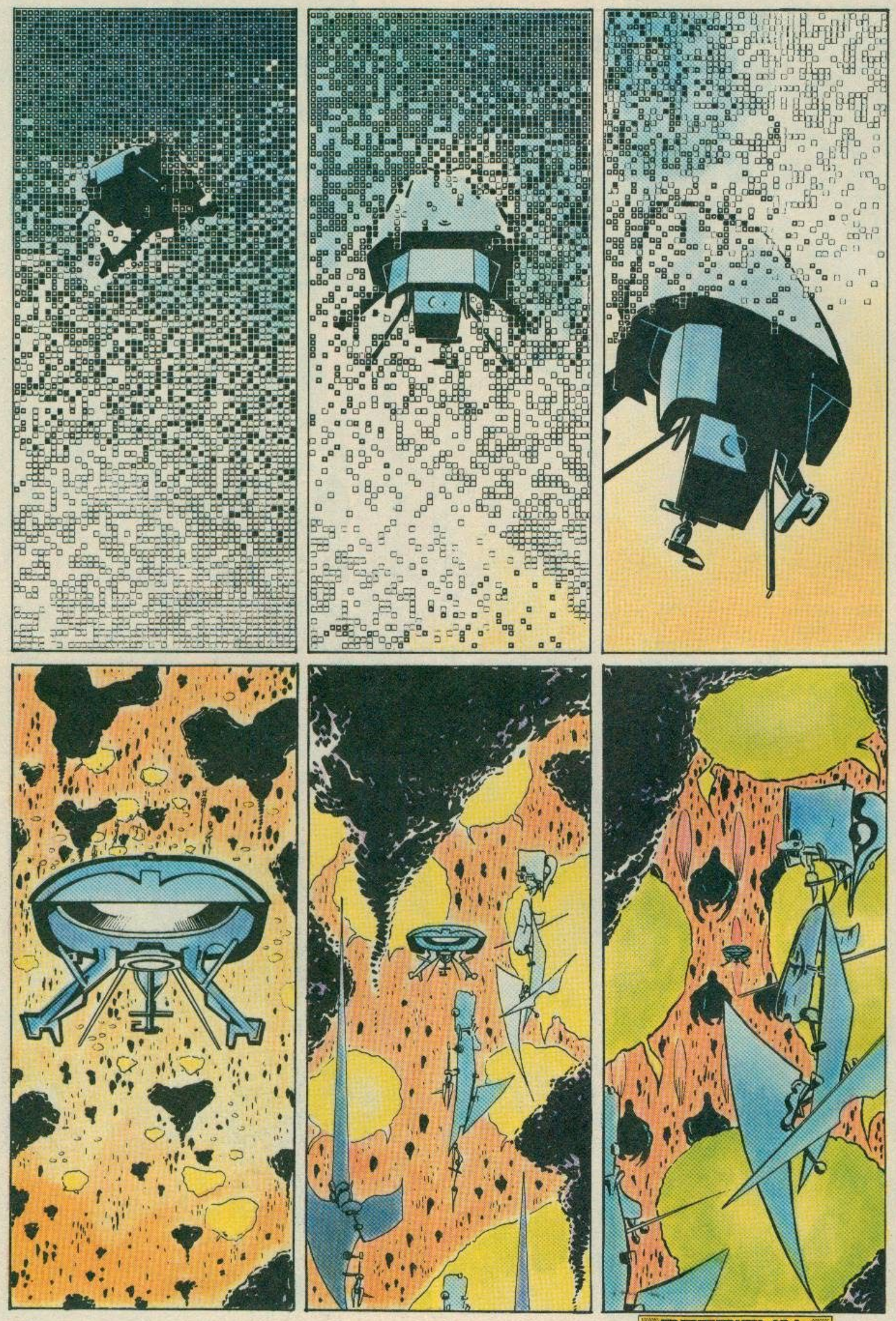

RETRIEVAL
TO BE CONTINUED